CHICAGO

Its History and Its Builders

A CENTURY OF MARVELOUS GROWTH

By J. SEYMOUR CURREY

Honorary Vice-President Illinois State Historical Society, Vice-President Cook County Historical Society, Member Chicago Historical Society, American Historical Association, Illinois State Library Association, National Geographic Society, Chicago Geographic Society.

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED

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INTRODUCTION.

NOUGH history is made in a city like this in every decade of its existence to fill many a volume with the annals of its progress and achievements in every field of human endeavor. The bald narrative of the city's growth is one of the "fairy tales of science," and the observer who has followed its course of development never ceases to wonder at the remarkable results of its material and intellectual activities as they take form before his eyes. No matter what plans of improvement are made, it is found before many years that they were not sufficiently comprehensive, and must be enlarged and adapted to the needs of the later time. If, fortunately, the founders of our great institutions, our libraries, museums, University, Historical Society, or Art Institute, have left room for expansion of the original plan, the need for greater work quickly presses upon its capacities.

Dates and statistics are the dry bones of history. Clothe them with human interest and they become imbued with life and are awakened into reality. No forward sweep of vision, however far it may be projected, can have its proper value and significance without a knowledge of the past for comparison. No realities of the present can be of the best use or enjoyment to us unless a background of the past is placed before us for our guidance and instruction. The man, who makes use not only of what his own experience has taught him, but of what he has learned of the experiences of those who have gone before, adds to his efficiency in proportion to his knowledge thus acquired. "History," says Gibbon, "is

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MARQUETTE'S MAP.

Showing the western part of Lake Michigan and route of Joliet's expedition of discovery in 1673. Joliet and Marquette began their journey at Green Bay, proceeded up the Fox River and down the Wisconsin River; followed the Mississippi down as far as the mouth of the Arkansas River, and returned by way of the Illinois River and the DesPlaines-Chicago Portage.

little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind;" but that is only a half truth. "History is philosophy teaching by example." More than that: it makes us the heirs of the ages, records the advances in enlightenment, warns us of dangers to avoid, and furnishes us examples of the virtues in every situation in life which we ourselves may encounter. "If men could learn from history," says Coleridge, "what lessons it might teach them."

Why was it that this city outstripped all other competitors in the race as a center of trade and transportation? The locality as Nature left it was not inviting. There was a wide-spread flat but a few feet above the level of the surface of Lake Michigan, extending far to the south and west, intersected by a sluggish water course, while to the north of the stream a sandy soil, but slightly elevated above the lands in the other direction, supported a forest of oak and maple. But by way of this slow-moving stream lay a highway to the "great river," which the explorers established as their route of travel, and by which the conquest of the magnificient domain beyond was made. Other routes were practicable, one by way of the Fox river of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin river, another by way of the St. Joseph and Kankakee rivers; but none was found where all the conditions were so favorable as the route by way of the Chicago and DesPlaines rivers.

More than that, there was a sturdy class of settlers who, in the early days of the century just closed, coming from states farther east, whose ancestors had themselves been pioneers, were most fortunately attracted to this spot. Representatives of the virile race of the Pilgrim Fathers, who after a century or two of residence in New England, New York and Ohio, pushed on until they planted themselves here at the gateway of empire. Great numbers of Scotch-Irish from the mother country, and Germans from the fatherland, came and added "bark and steel" to the human fibre of the growing metropolis, until the new city gained an impetus which, as yet, shows no signs of exhausting itself. Not only are they the support of the best traditions of the nation, but are wise and strong in building up and maintaining the material and moral institutions, which are the striking characteristics of the community. Add to this the natural

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HOUSE OF JOHN KINZIE

On the north side of the river, opposite Fort Dearborn. Its location was at the foot of Pine Street.

By permission of Chicago Historical Society,

JOHN H. KINZIE.

Son of John Kinzie, Chicago's first settler.

and valuable increment from the immigration of the Scandinavian and other nations of Europe that have been pouring their best and bravest into the city and the west for generations, and it is easily seen what accounts for the pre-eminence of Chicago and its tributary territory.

"In the rapidly developing west," says Thwaites, "a hundred years and less mark the gap between a primeval wilderness and a complete civilization. Time, like space, is, after all, but comparative. In these hundred years, the northwest has developed from nothing to everything."

History, like charity, begins at home. The first step in its study should be regarding the place we live in, though in practice our systems of teaching take up the history of remote times and places which belong to a later stage of historical study.

In later years many great movements and enterprises, whose beginnings and progress have found a place in former histories, have made important advances or diminished to the vanishing point. For example, the Illinois and Michigan Canal prodigiously affected the people of this city during the years that it was passing through its several stages of construction to completion and activity. Its importance as a factor in the development of the city has gradually waned until all its traditions are now memories only, and its prestige is transferred to the great waterway schemes in course of realization. Our lake marine has totally changed in character in the last generation. The World's Fair has passed into history, leaving behind it "trailing clouds of glory;" the literary and artistic life of the people has been quickened, keeping pace with the immense expansion of the material side of existence. Plans for railroad improvement, city transportation, extension of parks, and the beautification of the city, are engaging the attention of the community. It is the day of engineering triumphs, and enterprises of "great pith and moment" are continually becoming accomplished facts. The list is long which might be mentioned as examples, and while some have finished their careers, others again have entered upon new and enlarged fields of activity and usefulness.

Chicago has had its historians, though their works are difficult to procure and are only to be found in the libraries of public institutions or hidden away in private collections. There can be no question of the need

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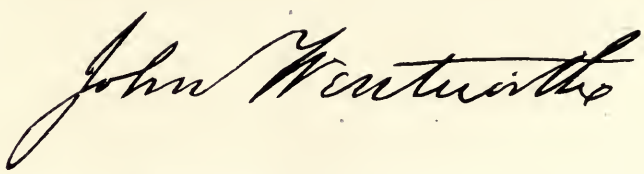

Came to Chicago in 1836; became Member of Congress in 1843, serving six terms, and was Mayor of the city in 1857 and 1860.

of a history prepared on a plan to mark the points of the rapidly receding past, with due regard to their true perspective value. What has been written is of great value, but the view-point has changed in the years since a history laying any claims to fulness has appeared. What were important events have diminished in historic value, and with a revision of statement there is demanded a thousand additions to complete the presentation into a consistent and harmonious whole. Likewise the constituency of readers has changed; a new generation has come upon the scene eagerly seeking knowledge of the events of the past.

The plan of this work will embrace the following principal divisions:

1. The explorers' period and the French domination.
2. The period of settlement and early growth.
3. The period of the Civil War and the Great Fire.
4. Lake marine and waterways.
5. Railways.
6. Manufacturing.
7. Mercantile.
8. Banks and banking.
9. Real estate.
10. Building and architecture.
11. Religious history.
12. Medical history.
13. Bench and bar.
14. Educational.
15. Literary and artistic.
16. Science and culture.
17. World's Fair.
18. Men of Chicago.
19. Chicago womanhood.
20. Chicago beautiful.

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CHICAGO AS IT APPEARED IN 1804.

Fort Dearborn on the left. John Kinzie's house on the right.

By permission of Chicago Historical Society.

FORT DEARBORN IN 1804.

Destroyed at the time of the Chicago Massacre in 1812. The later Fort Dearborn was built in 1816.

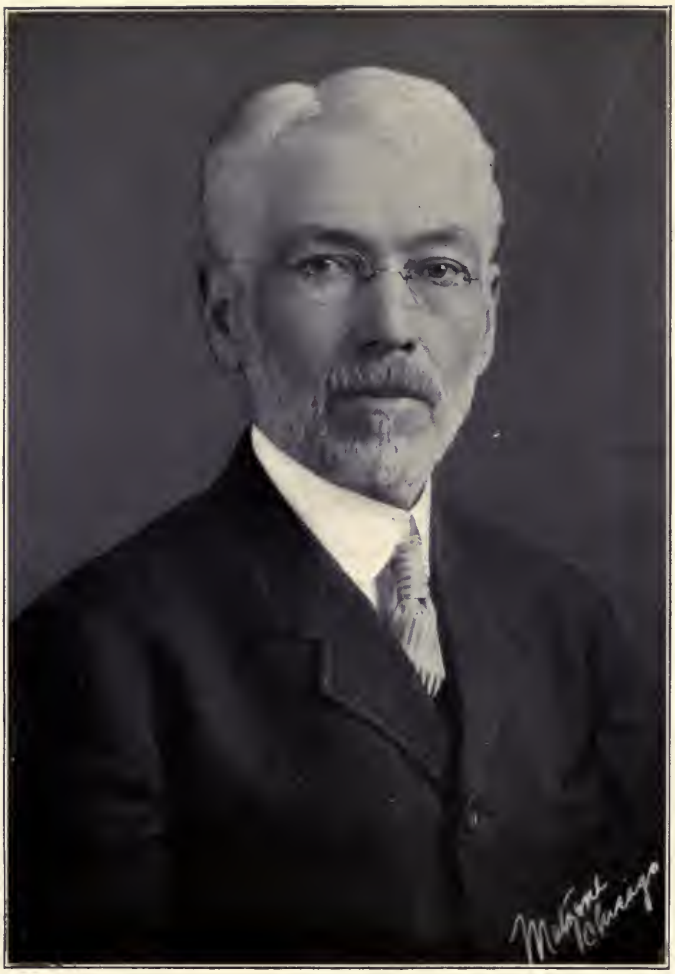
By permission of Chicago Historical Society. From painting by Edgar S. Cameron.

CHICAGO'S FIRST POSTOFFICE IN 1833.

Log building near the present site of Lake street bridge at the east end.

FEDERAL BUILDING AT CHICAGO.

Begun in 1896, completed in 1905.



J. SEYMOUR CURREY.

SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR.

MR. J. SEYMOUR CURREY has been a resident of Chicago and Evanston since his boyhood. Born in Peekskill, in the state of New York, he came west with his father and family and lived for a time in Will county, where his father carried on a farm. Being ambitious for a college education, he found employment in Chicago and engaged Prof. Geo. Quackenbos, then living on Chicago avenue near Rush street, as a private tutor, and prepared himself for admission to college. It was his purpose to go to Yale College, but finally he decided on the Northwestern University at Evanston. After some three years of preparation with Prof. Quackenbos, he entered the freshman class of the Northwestern University in the class of '71. He did not complete the course with this class, but from that time onward he has maintained his residence in Evanston.

Having been regarded as a man who was in sympathy with the cause of the public library movement, then in the infancy of its development, he was elected in 1886 as a director on the board of the Evanston Public Library. In this work he continued twenty-two years, being regularly re-elected when his term expired so long as Evanston remained a village; and in 1892, when it was incorporated as a city, he was appointed by the mayor to continue in the office, and re-appointed on each occasion when the regular term expired, until July, 1908, at which time he declined to serve longer. During the period of his service on the library board he acted as secretary, vice-president and president; and largely owing to his activity and influence a new building costing $135,000 was erected, which is one of the finest buildings of its size in the west.

The city council of Evanston, in a series of resolutions, expressed its "deep sense of gratitude for his faithful and efficient services while acting so long as a trustee for our city library." The board of directors of the Evanston Public Library adopted resolutions which were engrossed on parchment and handsomely framed, and in which the following language was used: "That we deeply regret Mr. Currey's retirement from the

NEW COOK COUNTY COURT HOUSE.

By permission of Chicago Historical Society.

COOK COUNTY COURT HOUSE 1865.

Procession leaving the building at the time that President Lincoln's remains were lying in state, May 1, 1865.

board of directors of this library; that we recognize that the final completion of our new library building is very largely due to his active and continuous efforts through many years."

In 1898 Mr. Currey, together with Judge Harvey B. Hurd and others, organized the Evanston Historical Society, of which he is now president. This society is regarded as one of the model societies of its kind in the west, and enjoys the confidence and support of the community with which it is identified.

More recently Mr. Currey has been instrumental in the formation of the Cook County Historical Society, of which he is vice-president. He is also honorary vice-president of the Illinois State Historical Society at Springfield, corresponding member of the Chicago Historical Society, member of the American Historical Society of Washington, D. C., the Illinois State Library Association, the National Geographical Society of Washington, D. C., the Chicago Geographical Society, and the Sons of the Revolution. From this it can be seen that his tastes and associations are of a character which will fit him for the task of preparing a history of Chicago, with the life and history of which he has been so long and intimately connected.

In the preparation of contributions to various publications on subjects of historical interest, Mr. Currey has been a prolific writer and lecturer, and he is regarded as the chief authority on matters of history connected with the North Shore, which has necessarily included Chicago history.

Throughout the long period of his residence in Evanston, Mr. Currey has been a daily visitor to Chicago, except during temporary absences. From a time anterior to the great fire he has been in constant contact with the city's life in all its stages of development; and what this means to a man whose interest in affairs is keen, and whose acquaintance is extensive among men who are influential in the building up of the city, can be readily understood; and thus he has naturally and inevitably become identified with the spirit and modes of thought of the people with whom he has been so long associated. Especially familiar with the details of commercial and manufacturing enterprises, he posseses a wide knowledge of their various activities, and has either assisted in or directed the organization and conduct of a number of large corporations.

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RUINS OF THE INTERIOR OF THE CHICAGO POSTOFFICE

after the great fire of 1871.

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INTER-STATE INDUSTRIAL EXPOSITION.

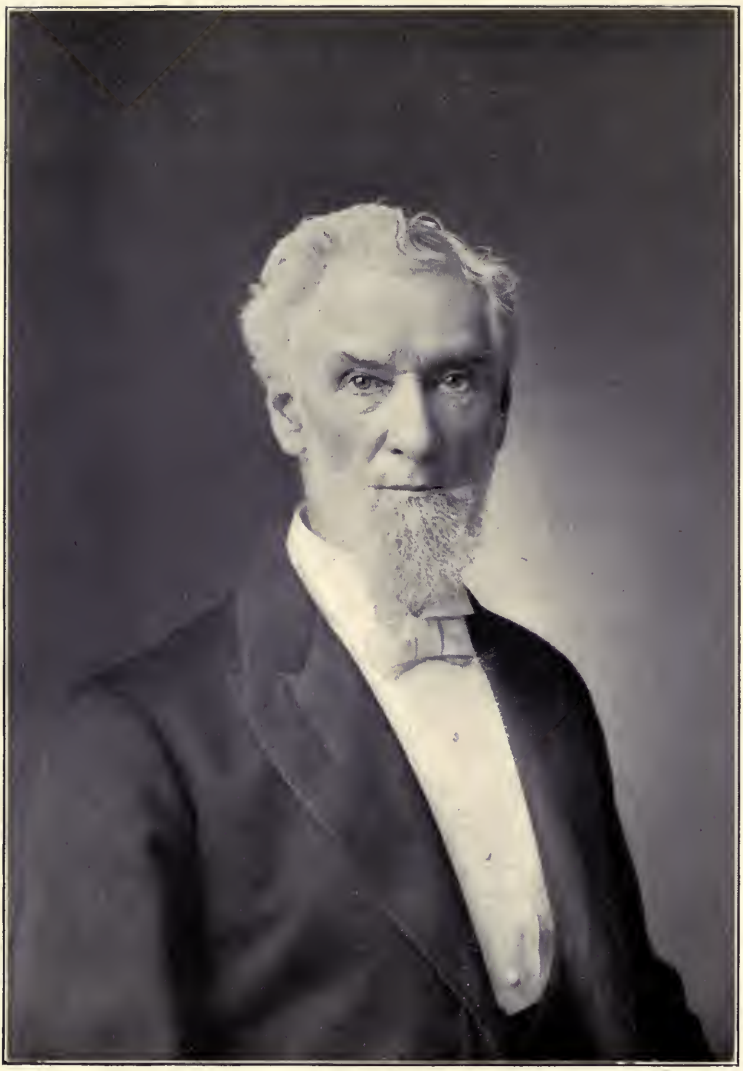
Built in 1873; demolished in 1892.

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENT.

HE work herein outlined has been in contemplation for a number of years. While several histories of the city have been published, we felt there was still here a field to be explored, facts unearthed, and a new setting given to stories heretofore published. In the selection of the editor for the work, many inquiries were made of those most directly interested, and who have taken the greatest interest in the city's history, and almost unanimously we were referred to J. Seymour Currey as being the one man best equipped by education and training to undertake the great task. He has gathered around him as Associate Editors and Advisory Board men and women specialists in certain lines, who by their writings and by their advice and counsel will be of inestimable help in making this the greatest local history ever published.

Mr. Currey has entered upon the work, and will throw his whole soul into the production of a history that will be unequalled by that of any great municipality. The publishers place around him no restrictions, and only request of him to do his best. On our part, we promise that we will do our utmost to make the work mechanically all that can be desired. It will appear in five royal octavo volumes, printed on a fine quality of book paper, with many beautiful illustrations to attract the eye and illustrate the subject matter of the history. A large sum will be expended for this purpose.

The work will appear in three styles of binding—de luxe, half morocco and buckram.



FREDERICK A. HOWE

Arrived in Chicago June 7, 1834, and has resided here continuously since that time. He is seventy-nine years old.

The de luxe edition will be very attractive, and will find a place in the homes of the most refined and intelligent people. This is limited to five hundred numbered sets, with the autograph of the author in each. It will be bound in three-quarter imported genuine Persian morocco, the binding to be all hand-made with extra large corners of the same material, using imported German cocoa paper on the sides of the book, the inside linings of the covers to be of the same paper to match the outside. The backs are to be finished in genuine gold leaf with a special design of tooling, unique in character, suitable for this style of book making. The edges are to be gilt with genuine gold leaf, and both the covers to be reinforced with muslin joints.

As may be inferred, the work is one of great magnitude and will require time and much research on the part of Mr. Currey, and, therefore, no definite time can be given for issuing the same. We want to make it as perfect as possible, and we feel that the citizens of this great city will give their support to it and aid in all their power to make it what it should be—a most attractive and trustworthy history.

The plan of the work contemplated has already received the hearty endorsement of many of Chicago's most progressive citizens.

THE S. J. CLARKE PUBLISHING CO.

358 Dearborn Street, Chicago.

From photograph taken in 1870

MRS. ADALINE (NICHOLS) HEARTT

Oldest living resident of Chicago. Born Fort Niagara, New York, March 21, 1831. Came to Chicago June 15, 1832. Daughter of Luther Nichols, soldier at Fort Dearborn.

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